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ABSTRACT

A study of decision making processes and communication rules, in a corporate setting undergoing change as a result of organizational ineffectiveness, examined whether (1) decisions about formal communication reporting systems were linked to management assumptions about technical creativity/effectiveness, (2) assumptions about creativity/effectiveness governed decisions and communication rules, and (3) organizational communication satisfaction differed with differing evaluations of organizational creativity/effectiveness. Subjects were 112 employees of a computer technology research and development laboratory that had recently replaced its manager and his three top assistants with managers from other labs in the same corporation because of the lab's ineffectiveness. Data were gathered through interviews, policy reviews, observation, survey instruments, and corporate evaluations of the lab. Results supported a relationship between management assumptions about technical creativity/effectiveness and formal reporting procedures. In particular, top management assumed that the replaced informal reporting systems provided inadequate information to make timely decisions involving considerable technical complexity, that the formal reporting environment demanded a precision of presentation that stimulated creativity and peer interaction, and that in order to stimulate effectiveness in an ineffective setting, substantial change in communication procedures would be required to make other changes credible. (FL)

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UNDERSTANDING DECISION-MAKING, COMMUNICATION RULES, AND
COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION AS CULTURE: IMPLICATIONS
FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

Given the complexity of understanding organizational communication as organizing, decision making, culture, and performance, the present study was designed to analyze and interpret selected decision-making processes and thematic communication rules as they relate to communication satisfaction and performance in a corporate field setting. The study focused on relationships between decisional premises, thematic communication rules, communication satisfaction, and quantifiable measures of organizational performance. Results suggested that basic assumptions about creativity/effectiveness are embedded in the decisions management makes about communication process and in thematic communication rules. Communication satisfaction remained a personal experience both influenced by and separate from external evaluations of organizational success.

Introduction

Scholars from a variety of disciplines engage in lively debate about how organizations construct the social realities which constitute organizational life and what role socially constructed realities play in organizational effectiveness. Proponents of the "strong culture" perspective view the construction of social realities which contribute to shared values as the very core of culture and central to high organizational performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Others suggest that this relationship between high performance and the clan or "strong culture" holds true only when organizational conditions exhibit ambiguity, complexity, and interdependence of transactions. The clan may, in fact, require too much time and agreement to be efficient and effective when conditions of high certainty exist (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983).

Regardless of the position taken in the "strong culture" debate, most scholars agree that central to the notion of organizational culture and performance are the decision-making processes in which organizational members engage. As Tompkins and Cheney (1983) have pointed out, ". . . the examination of the decision-making process provides a means of tapping the mutual influences of people and organizations" (p. 124). In fact, decision-making is part of what Putnam (1983) has described as the ongoing meaning process in organizations. Distinguished from simple movement or transmission of messages, she sees this process as, ". . . the ongoing, everchanging sets of interlocked behaviors that create as well as change organizational events" (p. 40).

In accordance with the Putnam view, numerous scholars have defined organizations as essentially communication phenomena (Weick, 1969; Farace, Monge & Russell, 1977; Wiio, Goldhaber & Yates, 1980; and Schall, 1983). Likewise organizational decision-making and communicating are described as inseparable with decisional premises providing the discovery of alternatives on which all organizational members ultimately act (Simon, 1945; and Tompkins & Cheney, 1983). In attempting to synthesize these viewpoints, organizing can be seen as a conscious limitation of alternatives and therefore synonymous with the decision-making process. And it is this limitation of alternatives (decisions) which become the constructed realities of the organization or its culture. As Schall (1983) has suggested, ". . . the communication processes inherent in organizing create an organizational culture, revealed through its communicating activities (Johnson & Shaw, 1980; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Louis, 1983) and marked by role-goal- and context-bound communication constraints--the rules (McPhee, 1978; O'Brien, 1978)" (p 560).

Given the complexity of simultaneously understanding organizational communication as organizing, decision-making, culture, and performance, the present study was designed to analyze and interpret selected decision-making processes and thematic communication rules as they relate to communication satisfaction and performance in a corporate field setting. Specifically, the study focused on relationships between decisional premises,

thematic communication rules, communication satisfaction, and quantifiable measures of organizational performance.

Background

The interrelatedness of communication and culture has been attested to in a variety of ways but rarely more directly than Hall (1959) when he stated, "Culture is communication and communication is culture" (p. 191). In describing the expansiveness of the communication/culture relationship, Smircich (1981) articulated both the functionalist view of culture as a variable of the organization and culture as a metaphor view making it synonymous with the organization and reflective of an interpretist paradigm. Additionally, Schall (1983) has suggested that ". . . organizations, cultures, and cultural 'rules' can be synthesized as communication phenomena, using a communication-rules perspective" (p. 557). Indeed consistent throughout the work of numerous researchers (Cushman, 1977; Fine, 1979; Spradley, 1979; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Bormann, 1983; and Gregory, 1983) is a concept of culture as a subjective construct to describe complex communication processes.

One of these fundamental communication processes within organizations is decision-making. Simon (1945, 1976), in his classic work, Administrative Behavior, describes decision-making as integral to organizations and inevitably related to all organizational doing. Tompkins and Cheney (1983) have gone so far as to state, ". . . all communication related to the organizing

process contributes in some way to decision making by organizational members. Decisional premises, with explicit or implicit values, goals, and facts, guide organizational members in choosing the best alternative" (p. 124). Additionally, decisional premises provide important information about the "theories-in-use" which guide organizational action (Argyris & Schon, 1978; and Smircich, 1983). Indeed, whether organizations are seen as responding to market, bureaucratic, or cultural transactions or combinations of all three, decision-making is a focal process in the construction of organizational realities.

Related to organizational decision-making and decisional premises are concepts of thematic communication rules which evolve through complex communication processes. Schall (1983) has defined thematic communication rules as general operationalizations of values and beliefs which are capable of influencing behavior and can be evaluated and sanctioned. She contended furthermore that thematic rules are direct reflections of culture. Described in this manner, the relationship between thematic rules and decisional premises (theories-in-use) becomes important. Thematic rules serve as potential premises which influence decisions and decisions in turn influence future premises and potentially thematic rules. Although rules perspective work is just beginning in organizations (Harris & Crohen, 1979), Schall's (1983) study in an organizational setting demonstrates the viability of a rules synthesis to develop cultural descriptions of organizations.

Inherent in these relationships among organizing, communicating, decision-making, thematic rules, and culture is the view of organizations as dynamic, on-going, changing processes with effectiveness dimensions. And it is in this evaluative area, diversely referred to as organizational effectiveness, creativity, or adaptability to change, that communication scholars seek to expand understanding about relationships between communication processes and the evolution of organizational outcomes. For example, communication processes have been linked to managerial effectiveness (Barnard, 1938; Kotter, 1982; and Boyatzsis, 1982); the integration of work units across organizational levels (Likert, 1967); characteristics of effective supervision (Redding, 1972); job and communication satisfaction (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, and Lesniak, 1978); and overall organizational effectiveness (Roberts, O'Reilly, Bretton & Porter, 1974; Lewis, Cummings & Long, 1981; and Clampitt & Downs, 1983). In summarizing eight field studies Tubbs and Hain (1979) concluded the findings ". . . provide consistent and strong support for the assumption that management communication behaviors do play a significant part in contributing to or detracting from total organizational effectiveness" (p. 1).

Despite the weight of this evidence, much remains to be understood about how management decisions specifically designed to generate organizational change influence complex communication processes and ultimately relate to evaluations of organizations and cultures along effectiveness dimensions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In an effort to expand understanding of relationships between communication and organizational effectiveness/creativity/change, this research examined management decision-making in a technological environment undergoing change as a result of organizational ineffectiveness. This research specifically sought to examine the following questions:

1. Are decisions about formal communication reporting systems linked to management assumptions about technical creativity/effectiveness?
2. Can assumptions about creativity/effectiveness be discovered in decisional premises and thematic communication rules?
3. Does organizational communication satisfaction differ with differing evaluations of organizational creativity/effectiveness?

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected in a Research and Development lab involved in the design and development of computer technology for specialized measurement instruments. The lab is one of seven R&D groups that are part of a large high technology corporation involved in diverse computer applications. The lab employs 149 people in both professional and technical support roles. Although a lab manager has final decision making responsibility, the lab typically operates with a four person management team (including the lab manager) with 20 middle managers reporting directly to this

group. The 20 middle managers are responsible for teams of individuals working on particular aspects for four major design projects. Work teams are comprised of professional engineers, designers, computer programmers, technicians, and clerical support personnel. There were 112 participants in the study representing 75 percent of the total number of employees and including all 24 managers.

Data were collected over a 26 month period beginning at a time when corporate Research and Development management had replaced the lab manager and his top three assistants with managers from other labs throughout the corporation. Although replacement of senior management was not typical for the corporation, the crisis which precipitated the move was the lab's inability to release new products for manufacture during the previous four years. At the time the research began, the corporate mandate to the new management group was to achieve product releases in two product lines within two years. All internal operating decisions including additional personnel changes were to be the sole responsibility of the new managers.

Data Collection

Data collection methodologies consisted of in-depth interviews, review of formal policies, attendance at meetings and reporting sessions, and written survey data. Additional data were obtained from corporate evaluations of the lab. Throughout the 26 month period, interviews were conducted with top management, all middle

managers, and 64 members of the professional and technical support staffs. A satisfaction with communication questionnaire was administered 12 months after the initial management changes and again 14 months later when the first lab product was released for manufacture.

With all lab personnel aware that the interviewer was interested in decisions about communication and their impact on technical creativity/effectiveness, interviews were conducted to yield retrospective accounts of decisional premises and sources of decisional premises. This methodology has been previously described by Tompkins and Cheney (1983), and Cheney (1983). Additionally, interview data along with field notes from informal encounters in the organization were utilized to develop thematic communication rules. The analytic process utilized to develop thematic rules was in keeping with the grounded-theory approach described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and utilized by Schall (1983) in her study of a communication-rules approach to organizational culture. Lab personnel evaluated accuracy of thematic perceptions through written surveys.

Finally, a 15-item questionnaire was administered to a randomly sampled group of technical professional and support staff. Thirty-nine of 45 surveys were returned for an 87 percent response rate. Survey responses were used to develop a job satisfaction rating and determine overall satisfaction with lab communication.

Although well developed communication satisfaction instruments

are reported in the literature, the lab specific questionnaire was developed to describe satisfaction with the particular communication processes which the new management team initiated. Twelve statements about lab communication and reporting systems were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = very little satisfaction to 5 = very great satisfaction. Additionally, a job satisfaction rating was developed from averaging responses to three job content items. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .92.

Procedures

Initial interviews with the lab manager and his three principal assistants were conducted one month after their arrival at _____ plant. The interviews occurred two days following their announcement to the middle manager staff of new product schedules and formal project reporting procedures. The decision of interest in the initial interviews was the establishment of the new reporting procedures. Of related interest was whether top management perceived these decisions to have any relation to the stimulation of technical creativity or whether they were initiated primarily as a control mechanism. Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to three hours. As in all interview sessions, notes were taken and reconstructed the same day.

The second set of in-depth interviews included all middle managers and occurred approximately three months after the new reporting procedures and project schedules had been announced. During that period, five middle managers had submitted resignations

and one of the five had requested that Corporate Research and Development investigate activities within the lab. Middle manager interviews focused on decisions about participation in the formal reporting structure and, for the five who had submitted resignations, their decision to leave the lab. Interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to an hour.

The lab manager and his staff participated in the third set of in-depth interviews. These interviews occurred eight months after their arrival in the lab and probed their decision to return scheduling responsibility to middle managers. The final in-depth interviews occurred 12 months after the project began and were conducted in conjunction with the first administration of the communication satisfaction questionnaire. These interviews were not conducted in the specific account analysis format which seeks retrospective accounts of specific events, but asked for accounts of how communication influence took place in the lab. Sixty-four lab members participated in the interviews which lasted from 30 to 45 minutes.

Even though the lab environment at the time of the interviews was often described as confrontational and conflicting, the researcher did not doubt the integrity of the accounts and believed inconsistencies and ambiguities were clarified through the interactive interview format.

Eighteen months into the project a set of thematic communication rules which had been developed from interview and

observational data were submitted to all lab personnel for written evaluation. One hundred twelve lab members responded and when 75 percent agreed that the rule either "fully represented" or "substantially represented" the "way things were in the lab" the rule was then included for comparison with the decisional premises indicated by management.

Twenty-six months after the project was initiated, and in conjunction with the first product release from the lab, the communication satisfaction questionnaire again was randomly distributed. Thirty-five respondents (78 percent response rate) completed the questionnaire and comparisons were made between the two administrations.

Finally, lab management made documents available to the researcher describing corporate evaluation of lab performance. These documents contained information about lab rankings, resource allocations and management evaluations. Additionally, lab evaluations were based on progress to product release and actual product release.

RESULTS

Due to the longitudinal nature of this field study, results are reported sequentially in the order of data collection. This section begins with a description of the formal communication reporting system mandated for the lab by the new management team. Interviews with the lab manager and his immediate staff follow formal system description. Results then are provided from

interviews with middle managers and from the second set of interviews with the lab manager and his staff. Next, thematic communication rules developed from technical and support staff interviews are compared to decisional premises reported by lab management. Finally, results are reported for the two administrations of the communication satisfaction questionnaire--the first administration during a period of low lab effectiveness and the second administration at a time when the lab was experiencing moderate success due to the release of a new product.

THE FORMAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

At the time lab management announced new product schedules and reporting procedures the lab had operated for 10 years with few formal scheduling or reporting procedures. Despite a growth in personnel from an initial group of 25 to the present 149, previous lab managers had operated primarily with informal reports from middle management and with quarterly product review sessions conducted primarily as technical critiques.

Management's revamping of the formal communication system was preceded by their cancellation of work on three of the four existing projects within the lab. Middle management was not consulted for developing cancellation plans or in the reassignment of personnel to staff the two new projects announced by senior management. Additionally, a twenty-four month development cycle was mandated in the announcement of new product definitions and

personnel assignments. These decisions were not typical of operating procedures throughout the corporation and had not been previously associated with the behaviors of the four new senior managers. Management also announced the following formal changes in the lab's reporting system. Middle managers would be required to hold weekly meetings with their subordinates to exchange project information and work on technical problems. Middle managers would report on a bi-monthly basis to lab management staff by particular project areas. Quarterly project report meetings would be lab-wide with extensive preparation of project status reports.

Additionally, a monthly technical forum was established to deal with particular technical issues. A schedule or product definition decision could not be revised unless documentation of necessity was presented at all of these forums. Presentations at meetings with the exception of the weekly staff gatherings were expected to be formally prepared with appropriate supporting materials.

Management Accounts of Communication Decisions

All four new managers strongly expressed certainty that the decision to formally structure the lab's communication system was the only way they could take control of a situation that had reached a level of ineffectiveness that could not be tolerated. They believed they were acting in the best interest of the corporation and in the best interest of the lab. As the lab manager stated, "We had no choice . . . if we did not take what is

considered to be drastic measures then the mandate from corporate would not be real to these people." When probed further about this statement, he related an underlying premise that for change to be believable change must occur. In other words, if the communication system were flexible and the results were ineffective then a rigid system would give a sense of imperative for change. Additionally, the management staff stressed the new system would give them the information they needed to make timely decisions about product directions and schedules. All four managers related confidence in the technical competence of lab personnel. They affirmed that their company would not have hired these people in the first place if there were serious problems with technical competence. One manager stated, "This has been a problem of communicating imperatives in a research environment--not a basic ability problem. These people are attempting to be elitist designers rather than researchers in a business environment where market needs can't wait on perfection." In accounting for not including middle management in the change decisions, the lab manager, with the other three separately confirming his statements, suggested that middle managers should not be held responsible for these changes. He knew the changes would be resisted and perhaps cause outrage among many of the technical professionals. If these people could blame their immediate supervisors, the supervisors would have more difficulty than if they could direct the blame to a higher level. When asked about their assumptions regarding middle

management's commitment to products, schedules, and reporting systems which had no middle management input, lab management operated from the premise that middle managers really had no choice. All four managers expressed a desire to have included others, but believed the seriousness of the lab problem precluded a more participative approach. When asked to account for the decisions about products to be cancelled, new product definitions, and scheduling decisions, the lab manager confirmed that corporate Research and Development had made most of these decisions after reviewing lab performance and expenditures for five years. When asked about their personal premises in taking these seemingly difficult assignments, all four expressed belief the corporation would reward them for making the effort and would make those rewards especially visible if they were successful. The lab manager in particular expressed doubt that any two year plan could be met. All four managers had received assurances that their careers would not be impaired if a final decision was made to disband the lab. These types of assurances from corporate operated as important premises for the management implementation of the procedures which were seen in the lab as extreme and not in concert with overall corporate philosophy. One of the four expressed an additional premise which related specifically to assumptions about creativity. He claimed that this formal and public reporting system would stimulate the excellence that he felt was potentially in the lab. He said he believed, and perhaps more than others on

his team, that the intelligence in the lab would be challenged if technical professional and middle managers were put in frequent positions of peer scrutiny.

Middle Manager Decisions to Participate

In the Scheduling and Reporting System

In accounting for their decisions about support and participation in new scheduling and reporting procedures, middle managers expressed considerably more diverse decisional premises than had the new lab managers. Seven of the middle managers expressed no difficulty in supporting and participating in the new systems. The seven operated from premises which generally suggested that corporate had no choice in making changes and that the lab would benefit in the long run from being forced to change. Several in this group were glad they had not been consulted about changes because peer pressure at their level to resist change would have resulted in tension and conflict among the middle management group. Two of this group expressed a belief that the projects would not meet the intended deadlines but would be much closer to being successful than if "dramatic action" had not been taken. Three of the group expressed a belief that if the lab did not improve soon, their chances of any career advancement within the corporation were effectively over.

The five middle managers who had submitted their resignations by the time of the interviews expressed very different decisional premises from the supportive group. The five who were leaving the

corporation based their decision on what they described as its loss of basic values. The individual who had asked for a corporate investigation of the new managers said he knew that corporate was behind these moves but he wanted to go on record as stating his opposition and deeply held belief that this was not the way to build good products and keep excellent people motivated. Others in the resigning group expressed concern that the company was not going to build good products if this type of autocratic management could prevail. When asked to describe why the lab had not produced a new product in the last four years, three of the five cited lack of resources and the difficulty of the problems on which they had been working. The other two said the four years since the last product release was not unusual in a research and development environment.

The remainder of the middle management group expressed diverse premises in explaining their decision to support the new procedures. Several in this group operated from the premise that they must be supportive because of the lack of personal alternatives. Many also indicated they were looking for other opportunities both within and without the corporation and would support these procedures only as long as it seemed their only alternative. Others suggested they would take a wait and see attitude. Most of this group did not believe the new system would stimulate technical creativity except for a short period. They did believe the lab had talented people and several suggested that the

standards for performance had become increasingly ambiguous in the past several years. The majority of the middle managers in this group believed the product change decisions should have been made with their participation although they did not object as strongly to their lack of input into changes in the reporting processes. Several of this group expressed a concern that the lab was becoming extremely confrontational and competitive. When asked how a confrontational and competitive environment affected overall performance, most responded that it would not improve creativity. Several managers did express moderate enthusiasm for the increase in technical exchanges.

Management Accounts of Returning Scheduling Decisions to Middle Managers

Eight months after the formal reporting system and scheduling procedures were initiated, the lab manager announced he was returning project scheduling responsibilities to middle management. Agreement on scheduling changes would no longer have to receive prior approval by his staff. Middle managers would continue the basic reporting process and would keep lab management informed about scheduling changes and potential impact on product releases. At the time of the announcement three of the four major design projects in the lab were having significant technical difficulties while the remaining project was proceeding according to the previously announced schedule.

In describing the decision to return scheduling

responsibilities to the middle managers, the lab manager indicated he and his staff believed the group was ready for more responsibility. He operated from the premise that middle management now knew that the lab was being held accountable for their projects and that these individuals had always been capable but just not committed to timely product release. He also suggested that middle managers could now get more effort from their direct subordinates if the subordinates saw them as more actively involved and influential in scheduling decisions. One member of the lab staff disagreed with the lab manager and his other peers. He believed returning scheduling responsibility was premature because of the difficult technical problems facing three of the projects. He felt progress would best be accomplished if scheduling pressures remained fairly severe. He was operating from the premise that a competitive spirit was helping the lab to work more quickly. His counterparts contended that the sooner the lab could return to the general operating philosophy of the company--real management responsibility at the project level--the better for the long term development of the middle managers. The lab manager also expressed a personal premise influencing his decision. He said, "I have never been viewed for so long a time as such a bad guy and this is just not comfortable. I know these people can do the job if only they will see we aren't trying to make bad products--we just have to make products." All of the top management staff agreed that the formal reporting sessions were

generating a technical exchange that was useful for their interactions with corporate. They expressed strong belief they could defend what the lab had accomplished even in the midst of technical difficulties with the more detailed information. One manager also saw the somewhat formal presentations as good for the development of the middle managers and their subordinates.

Thematic Communication Rules

One year after the initial lab changes, a series of interviews was conducted with 64 members of the technical and support staff. Questions were asked about how influence operated in the lab, how communication occurred, and what was considered valued communication behaviors. From these interviews a series of thematic rules was developed and submitted in written form. Of the 21 rules submitted for lab-wide evaluation, nine rules received 75 percent agreement that they either "fully represented" or "substantially represented" how things worked in the lab. These nine rules were compared to management decisional premises as identified through the three phases of interviewing with lab and middle managers (Table 1). All nine thematic communication rules operated at one time or another as management decisional premises. Furthermore, similar thematic rules were utilized as decisional premises by managers who disagreed with each other regarding specific decisions. Finally, assumptions about creativity and effectiveness were embedded in both decisional premises and thematic communication rules.

Table 2 reports a comparison of the two administrations of the communication satisfaction measure. The lab was ranked as the least effective of all corporate labs at the time of the first administration. By the second administration the lab's corporate evaluation had improved and a product release had been accomplished. For the 10 compared variables, only satisfaction with overall lab communication exhibited a significant difference. For the more effective evaluation period, lab communication was marginally ($p < .10$) more satisfying than in the condition of low lab effectiveness.

Tables 3 and 4 report the results of regression analysis of communication satisfaction variables as predictors of overall job satisfaction. For the low effectiveness period, five variables were shown to be statistically significant ($F_{5,46}=5.65, p < .001$) for predicting job satisfaction with the step-wise multiple regression technique. The five variables accounted for .38 of the variance and an adjusted R^2 of .31. Table 4 reports the improved effectiveness period with three variables shown to be statistically significant ($F_{3,55}=9.90, p < .00001$) for predicting job satisfaction. The three variables accounted for .35 of the variance with an adjusted R^2 of .32. For both equations the "feedback on performance" variable is of particular importance. "Information on lab decisions" and "information on performance to compensation decisions" variables are found in both equations. In the low effectiveness condition, two additional variables,

"satisfaction with information on reasons for changes" and "information about how corporate evaluates lab performance" contributed positively to higher job satisfaction.

An examination of the regression coefficients from the equations identified all variables except the "performance to compensation decisions" variable in the low lab effectiveness condition as positively contributing to higher job satisfaction. The higher the "satisfaction with information about performance to compensation decisions" in the low lab effectiveness condition, the lower the overall job satisfaction rating.

DISCUSSION

An examination of the decisional premises and sources of decisional premises offered as accounts of the decisions to implement formal reporting systems within the lab support a relationship between management assumptions about technical creativity/effectiveness and formal reporting procedures. Specifically, top management assumed that the informal reporting systems which they were replacing provided inadequate information to make timely decisions involving considerable technical complexity. Additionally management assumed that the formal reporting environment demanded a precision of presentation, and presumably thinking, that stimulated creativity and peer interaction. Finally, management operated from the premise that in order to stimulate effectiveness in an ineffective environment substantial change in communication procedures would be required to

make other requested changes credible. In some respects this assumption argues not so much for a formal reporting system but for any abrupt change from a communication system associated with ineffective performance.

In addition to the relationships between the formal communication system and assumptions about creativity/effectiveness, thematic communication rules and decisional premises at both levels of management reflected assumptions about organizational effectiveness. Specifically, thematic rules tended to define creativity/effectiveness within the constraints of business timeliness and the release of products. Quality of products was implied to be important but secondary to market requirements. However, thematic rules and decisional premises consistently reflected a consensus that organizational members were capable of creativity/effectiveness--the real dispute surrounded defining creativity/effectiveness. The corporate evaluation process, however, established management as ultimately responsible for the creativity/effectiveness definition.

For technical professionals and support staff external evaluations of lab effectiveness did not significantly alter their communication satisfaction. However, different types of information contributed to job satisfaction depending upon external evaluation conditions. Specifically having more information about reasons for change and how the external evaluation was to be conducted were more important in times of low effectiveness than in

periods of success. These findings suggest that communication satisfaction may not be directly influenced by external evaluations but that overall job satisfaction is related to an understanding of how the work environment is being shaped and what will be the process of evaluating that shaping. Results from both the low effectiveness condition and the improved evaluation condition support the importance of feedback to individuals for both communication and job satisfaction.

During the 26 months of this study, five managers left the organization and 10 additional personnel changes occurred in the technical professional and support staff. Exit interviews established the latter changes resulted from normal attrition unconnected to lab changes. Resources remained fairly comparable to previous periods. With relatively few staff and resource differences, the major variables to change in the lab were stated management requirements surrounding effectiveness and formal reporting systems. Twenty-six months after these announced decisions a product release was accomplished and the lab evaluation from corporate had improved. While it is impossible to determine whether a new product release would have occurred under prior management and the informal communication system, corporate Research and Development credited the improvement to the somewhat dramatic changes.

During the 26 months, technical information exchanges increased for all personnel. Of interest to communication scholars was the

somewhat formal structuring of these exchanges with the stated intent to stimulate creativity through in-depth and comprehensive preparation and peer critique. Additionally, although the new system was structured in terms of levels of involvement and frequency, the system was decidedly participative and intended to open ideas to criticism from both management and technical professionals.

Observations and data collection during 26 months do not give sufficient opportunity to assess all implications or potential effects of the formal system, and obviously the effectiveness measures for the lab are not capable of predicting long-term results. Yet, the reality of the corporate organizational experience suggests that changes are frequently mandated as a result of short term observations of effectiveness/ineffectiveness. Given this reality--of experience and probably necessity--understanding how communication intervenes in this short term process and in shaping the reality of experiences for organizational members remains an important concern. In sum, this research suggests that basic assumptions about creativity/effectiveness are embedded in the decisions management makes about communication process, in the thematic communication rules which emerge through complex communication processes, and that communication satisfaction remains a personal experience both influenced by and separate from external evaluations of organizational success.

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Table 1

Management decisional premises contrasted to thematic communication rules of influence as described by technical and support personnel

Management Decisional Premises	Thematic Communication Rules
The corporation will reward us for this lab assignment (Top Mgt)	Working on tough projects defines your intellectual worth
Frequent technical critiques by peers is constructive (Top Mgt)	You are expected to argue your position
The corporation is losing basic values (Middle Mgt)	
Complain to corporate (Middle Mgt)	
The lab is confrontational and competitive (Middle Mgt)	
The lab is elitist in product design--not realistic to business (Top Mgt)	Mgt wants quality products only if they meet schedules and market requirements
Middle Mgt has no choice about accepting new products, schedules, reporting systems (Top Mgt)	Releasing a product is how your team communicates its worth
Corporate had to make changes (Middle Mgt)	
Detailed data helps Mgt make decisions and defend lab progress (Top Mgt)	Only go to mgt with hard data
Technical, support and middle mgt are capable (Top Mgt)	The corporation hires only the best
Lab has talent although ambiguous performance standards (Middle Mgt)	
Middle mgt can accept scheduling responsibilities (Top Mgt)	
Our careers are over if this lab doesn't produce (Middle Mgt)	Positive feedback is nice, results are the measure
Product decisions should have involved middle mgrs. (Middle Mgt.)	Responsibility for excellence is everybody's business
We will shoulder responsibility for tough decisions so middle mgt can work effectively with subordinates (Top Mgt)	You can complain to middle mgt. but not top mgt

Table 2

T-tests for significance between communication satisfaction scores for a low lab effectiveness period and an improving lab effectiveness period

Satisfaction Variables	Low Effectiveness		Improving Effectiveness		T Value	2-Tail probabilities
	X	S	X	S		
Feedback on performance	2.33	1.11	2.46	1.12	-0.48	.64
Lab reporting meetings						
Info on lab decisions	1.82	.94	1.63	.81	.94	.35
Info on reasons for lab changes	2.60	.76	2.47	.96	-0.03	.96
Info on performance to compensation decisions	3.85	.88	3.57	.88	1.34	.18
Overall lab teamwork	3.20	1.08	3.51	1.10	-1.22	.23
Overall lab communication	2.39	1.05	2.83	1.01	-1.79	.07*
Info about corporate lab-wide performance evaluation	2.68	.74	2.46	1.01	1.09	.28
Lab management communication	2.27	1.02	2.50	1.88	-0.87	.39
Freedom to express ideas	2.44	1.07	2.34	1.06	0.38	.71

N for Low Effectiveness = 39

N for High Effectiveness = 35

*p<.10

Table 3

Communication satisfaction variables as predictors of job satisfaction: low effectiveness condition

Variable	Multiple R	R ²	R ² Change	r	Beta	F Change
Feedback on performance	.51	.26	.26	.51	.51	17.11*
Info on reasons for lab changes	.57	.32	.07	.42	.27	11.54
Info about corporate lab-wide performance evaluations	.58	.33	.01	.37	.14	8.06
Info on performance to compensation decisions	.60	.36	.03	.25	-.24	6.70
Info on lab decisions	.62	.38	.02	.35	.15	5.65

*All F values significant at $p < .0001$

Table 4

Communication satisfaction variables as predictors of job satisfaction: improved effectiveness condition

Variable	Multi- ple R	R ²	R ² Change	r	Beta	F Change
Feedback on performance	.51	.26	.26	.51	.51	20.37*
Info on performance to compensation decisions	.57	.32	.06	.42	.26	4.61**
Info on lab decisions	.59	.35	.03	.35	.19	2.67

*F value significant at $p < .0001$.

**F value significant at $p < .05$.